

'Yes, Phanor,' said Rosen, 'we are about to set off, my old friend; we are going to traverse the fields, to see the sun rise, to hear the nightingale and the lark.'

And taking his hunting-horn, the artist began to sound a call capable of awakening the Seven Sleepers, Phanor, full of emulation, began to yelp, and their neighbor, M. Lendore, speedily made his appearance, sleeping gown and night cap, and angrily declared to Rosen his intention of having the landlord give him notice.

Rosen made no end of excuses, and assured him that he was going away for six months; that same day he quitted Paris without bidding anyone farewell.

He wandered through Auvergne and Charolais, and at the beginning of the vintage found himself quite close to Saint-Amour, and entered the village one beautiful evening.

It was not yet 10 o'clock, but every one had gone to bed. The murmur of the streams and the chirping of the crickets alone broke the silence of the night. Rosen saw two inns, but both were shut and without light, and continuing to advance through the village he arrived under the linden trees near the church. There he seated himself on a stone bench, and asked himself what he was going to do. He had taken a substantial supper, the weather was splendid, and he thought that he should perhaps do well to continue his journey, and go to see whether the inhabitants of Coligny were as drowsy as those of Saint-Amour.

Whilst he was thus deliberating with himself, he perceived in the window of a small low-lit house, situated in the market place, a light which was weak and soft like that of a night light.

'Someone is ill there,' he said to himself.

The slender shadow of a young girl passed across the white curtain.

'The patient is not alone,' he added.

And for the first time the sense of his isolation took possession of the young artist's heart. He thought of the time when during his own illness his mother and his sisters watched beside him; and he recalled the more distant time when his father, believing him to be asleep, said to his mother, 'See, how handsome he is!'

His parents were no more. One of his sisters had married, and followed her husband to America; the other was in a convent. The paternal house, closed for ever to him, belonged now to strangers. He was free, young, full of hope, talent, enthusiasm, but alone and wandering on the earth.

One of Schubert's most beautiful melodies, 'The Wanderer's Night Song,' came to his mind with those thoughts. Almost unconsciously he began to sing, and his sonorous voice resounded in the calm night.

Hardly had he begun when he heard a window being cautiously opened; the shadow that he had previously noticed appeared again, and as soon as he had just finished the door of the house was opened, and an aged woman, draped in black, approached Rosen timidly.

'Monsieur,' she said to him, 'are you not Henri Rosen. Are you not the friend of Leopold Gerdaldy?'

'Certainly, madame,' he said, astonished. 'How did you know me?'

'Leopold recognised your voice,' said the old lady.

'Gerdaldy here!' exclaimed Rosen, 'I thought he was in Germany.'

'He is at home, and very ill, Monsieur. I entreat you to visit him.'

'Oh! Madame,' said the young man. 'I dare not present myself at your house at such an hour. I was about to go to an inn, and to-morrow I shall have the honor of paying you a visit.'

'Come to our house,' said the lady. 'Alas! night no longer exists for me; for a long while my son spends sleepless nights. He desires to see you. The least contrariety causes him alarming attacks. For mercy's sake, come quickly.'

The poor mother led Rosen to her house. As he ascended the wooden staircase Rosen could not refrain from a smile when he thought of Leopold's statements in speaking to his friends in Paris of his mother's chateau.

They entered. The patient, sitting up in bed, his face flushed and his eyes sparkling with fever, exclaimed on seeing Rosen:

'I said that it was surely he!—O, my dear Rosen, come speak to me about Paris! I will be back there in about a fortnight's time. My opera has been accepted; I am on the road to glory and to fortune! Your voice has recalled to me the festivals and concerts of last winter. How delighted I am to see you! I am dying of weariness. You will relate to me

all that has happened in the world since I became confined here. Sister, prepare a good supper and a comfortable bed for Rosen. I am anxious for him to stay here. Rosen, do tell me the news!'

'I know that the weather has been splendid all the summer,' said Rosen, 'and that for the last five months I have not looked into a paper, thank goodness! I like much better to contemplate, and to paint the marvels which a kind Providence has created than to distend myself with the follies of men. If I had, like you, a cosy home in a beautiful district, a mother, and a sister, like her I see here, I would never go to Paris.'

'Nevertheless,' said Gerdaldy, 'it is there only one can live. I will return there; I wish to be there before the winter. You will wait for me, Rosen, and we shall set off together.'

'For that,' said the little sister, 'you must be good, brother. You speak too much, and you will increase your fever.'

And she covered him up and embraced him as though he were a child.

'Come, Monsieur Rosen, I am going to serve your supper.'

And, leading him to an adjoining room, she served him some refreshments with so frank a grace that the young painter thought of those angels that Fra Angelico has represented bringing bread to the religious of the Order of St. Dominic. Henriette Gerdaldy was at this time about sixteen years old, but her small figure, her short and curling hair, gave her the appearance of a child of twelve, and Rosen spoke to her with quite a paternal familiarity.

'I have already supped, my dear young lady,' he said to her; 'do not give yourself so much trouble on my account.'

'Oh, Monsieur!' said Henriette, 'I beg of you to accept at least a glass of syrup; it was my mother who made it, and it is very good. If you only knew how happy we are to see the pleasure your arrival gives my brother.'

Rosen took the glass, and the young girl gave Phanor a large piece of cake.

Madame Gerdaldy soon rejoined them.

'My son appears to be much more at ease,' she said. 'Oh, Monsieur! what sorrow for me to see the illness of this poor child!'

'They are a good omen,' said Rosen; 'you will see that he will recover.'

'May God grant it,' said the poor mother; 'but, monsieur, I entreat of you that no exaggerated discretion may lead you to refuse my son's invitation. Stay with us as long as you can; it will be a deed of charity. You will help us to divert the thoughts of this poor child, and our environs are so beautiful that you will find abundance for the exercise of your pencil. Leopold likes you so much! Often he has spoken to us of you, and of the happy hours he spent in your studio. Will you not stay with us?'

Rosen could not refuse the offer of this afflicted mother; he therefore took up his abode with them, and set himself to aid in nursing the patient with so much skill, good behaviour, and gaiety that Leopold was delighted. The latter, unreasonable as those unwell often are, could not bear the idea that his friend should leave him. It was necessary that Rosen should be always at hand, to sing to him the airs he loved, to talk to him of Paris, and to carry him from one room to another so that he might sit in the sunshine. Nothing was good, nothing was to his satisfaction, unless it was given or done by Rosen. His mother and sister would have easily been made jealous by so exaggerated an affection were there a place in those devoted hearts for a personal sentiment, but, happy at seeing the patient growing better, they constantly testified to Rosen the gratitude they felt.

Rosen, foreseeing that his stay at Saint-Amour would last for some time, wrote to Paris to have sent on to him some things of which he stood in need. He requested the person who was to forward him the parcel to enclose therein a box of sweetmeats, and when the parcel arrived he opened it at Gerdaldy's bedside.

The latter, with all the joy of a child, began tasting the Parisian delicacies, as he took them out of their wrappers. But he had the address to place aside unobserved a newspaper that had been wrapped round a box of preserved fruit, and to hide it under his pillow. A little while after he said he desired to sleep, and wished to be left alone. His mother, sister, and Rosen went down to the parlor and began arranging the various things that had come from Paris. Suddenly a piercing cry from the sick man's room made them tremble. They rushed upstairs to him, and found he had fainted. More than an hour passed before he recovered consciousness, and delirium succeeded the fainting fit.